

Our Roots

Written by Administrator
Friday, 03 June 2011 17:39 -

In the Beginning

*In the beginning, the locality now known as Heyworth was covered by a heavy growth of timber and underbrush which was inhabited by the Kickapoo Indians, and was the abode of great numbers of deer, wild turkeys, and packs of large gray wolves. Away to the east and south stretched the broad prairies with their swamp-lands heavily covered with prairie grass and traversed by multitudes of prairie chickens and wolves. This area was known as Randolph's Grove.

It was to this region that many worthy settlers came. There were the Rutledges, Funks, Passwaters, Bishops, Nobles, Karrs, Wakefields, and Martins; some of them coming as early as 1824. All of these families settled in the immediate vicinity of the present Village of Heyworth.

Campbell Wakefield

Campbell Wakefield was essentially the founder of Heyworth. In the course of his achievements, Campbell Wakefield became the owner of a vast tract of land of which Heyworth now occupies a portion. He entered some of the land and bought some, and continued adding to his original tract until he obtained about fifteen hundred acres in one plot.

Illinois Central Railroad

As the population increased and industries began to spring up, it was seen that railroads were needed and could be used to great advantage. In 1852 and 1853, the Illinois Central Railroad was constructed through the Wakefield land. When the cars began running in 1855, the question immediately arose as to the location of a train station in the vicinity, for it was known that one would be at some place in Randolph's Grove, but it was not easy to find out just where. Many people wanted the station to be built on their property. Wakefield immediately donated a large tract of land for the foundation of a town, for the Presbyterian Church, a district school, and also for a station, side tracks, etc. The controversy was settled.

Naming of Heyworth

Previous to the construction of the railroad, there was no post office located here. In those days the mail was carried by stage coaches. Around the year 1856, when the new station was named, the first post office was established. In 1856 the new station was named "Elmwood," but finding that this name was already taken by someone in Peoria County, the President of the Illinois Central Railroad proposed to call the new station "Heyworth," the name of an English director of the railroad.

Our Roots

Written by Administrator
Friday, 03 June 2011 17:39 -

After the establishment of the station, Campbell Wakefield made several donations to encourage trade and induce business men to locate in the new town. He became the proprietor of the new town. The Village of Heyworth was incorporated on March 31, 1869.

Growth Today

And while railroads brought growth during the 19th century, today growth is driven by recession resistant business expansion occurring primarily in Bloomington–Normal, located just a few minutes away.

*Taken from “A History of Heyworth,” published by the Heyworth Star in 1926 and written by Charles A. Marker.